



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Office of Information  
Press Service



Release - Immediate.

December 9, 1926.

REINDEER INDUSTRY PROMISES  
TO BE IMPORTANT TO ALASKA

The reindeer industry in Alaska promises to become an important factor in the future development of the Territory, says the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture. It is comparatively a recent undertaking and as a commercial enterprise dates back only a few years. The original stock of 1,280 animals imported from Siberia about 25 years ago has increased to about 350,000, distributed throughout the Territory in 110 herds.

The rapidly growing industry requires that scientific studies be made for its best development, and under Congressional authorization such studies were begun by the department in 1920 through the Biological Survey. Improved methods have been recommended to herd owners for handling reindeer and utilizing the range. A study of the range is now being made with a view to inaugurating a permanent system of grazing allotments. Careful and continuous inspection will be required to determine whether an area is being under or overgrazed.

One of the more fundamental of the problems studied has to do with the relation of lichens to grazing. Some of the results of this study are published in Department Bulletin 1423-D, just issued. Plans for future

work or template studies chiefly along such lines as the development of interior ranges, conditions governing forage and range management, breed improvement of reindeer, and the control of the diseases and parasites to which the animals are subject. In view of the fact that conditions in Alaska are so different from those in the States as regards the kind of animal under consideration, the nature of the forage, and the climate, it is particularly important that thorough studies be made.

Full progress in the reindeer industry can come only from the adoption of better management methods, not only in range control and regulation, but in herd management and provisions for transporting and marketing the meat. This involves open herding, reduction of the proportion of bulls in the herds, selection of the best stock for breeding, infusion of new blood by cross breeding with native caribou, adoption of improved methods of corralling and branding, keeping sled reindeer in each herd, and providing for herd ownership on the percentage basis for increases, with one registered brand for a community herd.

Copies of the new bulletin may be obtained, as long as the supply lasts, by writing to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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